

SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT, & PEDAGOGY

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Wrestling: the impact of their cultivation on achievements in various areas of life

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Abstract

Aim. The problem of the impact of wrestling skills, training, and related experiences on the careers of people who have achieved success in various areas of life was discussed.

Method. The qualitative method of expert judgments, also known as the competent judges' method, was used. Seven specific questions were answered by seven experts from five countries.

Results. Professionals very positively assess the impact of wrestling on their further careers after completing competition training. They indicate the improvement of general physical fitness, acquired skills, strengthening of willpower and character.

Conclusions. For the participants of the study, practicing wrestling was or still is an asset in their further professional careers, helping them to achieve a better status position.

Introduction

The issue concerns combat sport with a centuries-old tradition in Europe and outside Europe [Cynarski 2020b]. We know that this wrestling sport, practiced since ancient times, builds strength and versatile physical fitness. Wrestling training probably causes the highest energy expenditure in a training unit in comparison to other combat sports. This hard training, however, ensures a high level of fitness and capacity of the body. The competitor also acquires real combat skills in close combat and in a lying position, which gives him a relative sense of security [cf. Lenc 1967; Dmowski, Skubis 1976; Jagiello 2000; Jaskolski, Wolkow, Jagiello 2005; Korobeynikov *et al.* 2019].

How does all this translate into the future fate of people who got to know wrestling? The authors dealt with **the problem of the impact of wrestling skills, training, and related experiences on the careers of people who have achieved success in various areas.**

The scientific perspective is co-created by the theory of sports training, sociology of sport, and the General Theory of Fighting Arts [Ambrozy 2004; Cynarski 2019;

Korobeynikov *et al.* 2021]. Wrestling is a sport *par excellence*, which does not prevent it from being treated in terms of “art of fighting”. The more so because this theory treats the man of sport as a subject and puts him in the center of attention, and also takes into account a broad axiological, psychological and socio-cultural context. The sociology of sport and the sociology of the profession are also important for research, especially when it comes to professional careers. We know that a sports career has a jumping character – you can suddenly become a champion, but you can also suddenly lose the championship throne. On the other hand, the coping of athletes after their sports careers is different [Pawlak 1983; Lenartowicz 2009]. Here, however, the issue concerns the impact of wrestling as a sport discipline on life achievements, regardless of sports achievements.

Method

We specify the above problem with a series of seven research questions (Appendix), indicating the scope of the research. We ask:

1. Has practicing sports wrestling significantly improved your health and overall fitness?
2. Has fitness training with wrestling helped you acquire other sports or martial arts skills?
3. Has knowledge of wrestling helped in business or research work?
4. How did it affect your professional career?
5. Was it a school of character, and if so, to what extent?
6. How long have you been training (how many years or for how many years have you been training)?
7. Have you had any more serious sports injuries?

A qualitative method of expert judgments, also known as the method of competent judges, was adopted. The answers were provided by seven specialists representing European countries (Germany, Poland, Spain, and Ukraine) and the USA. In this method, the amount is sufficient [Cynarski 2021: 53-54]. One of the authors acts as the respondent here, which results from the additional use of the autoethnography method [Marchal 2010; Bielecka-Prus 2014]. The second author, like some of the respondents, practices Japanese varieties of wrestling (*judo* and *jujutsu*). However, they have different specificity. On the other hand, all the experts have practiced or are still practicing sports wrestling - this classic European combat sport. They are men aged 50-75, with a stable professional and social position, who have achieved success in various fields. The survey was conducted online at the turn of 2020/2021.

It is worth emphasizing that qualitative research in sport sciences is gaining more and more recognition in the scientific community [Evans *et al.* 2021].

Results

To **question 1** (Did the cultivation of stocks significantly improve your health and overall fitness?), Respondent number 1 replied as follows: "Yes. Until now, I am in good health and I do not treat any diseases. I have never been treated in a hospital. Most of the exercises in the discipline I am able to do at the moment, the acquired skills in the field of gymnastics (acrobatics) and weight lifting are useful for me in conducting classes [in teaching physical education] ". This respondent is a former wrestling trainer and now a teacher.

Respondent no. 2 (still an active trainer and local government activist) began with the introduction: "At 62, I can say with full responsibility that wrestling has had a very large impact on the development and life achievements of everyone who came into contact with them. My answers and observations will be based on myself as well as on the pupils whom I taught the first steps of the ABC of wrestling, later I will add their small and bigger successes. In my opinion, each of the boys who attended the wrestling section has

already achieved success." He replies, "In my case [wrestling] had a significant effect on my health as well as overall fitness. There is no doubt that wrestling is a sport that provides comprehensive development of the whole organism in every aspect. At 62, I have no problem doing a shoulder roll anywhere, regardless of the ground."

Respondent no. 3 replied shortly: "The drive for self-improvement required for wrestling has continued throughout my life. Fitness continues to be important to me. I try to challenge myself." A fourth expert (university professor) stated: "I am not sure about this. I started to practice judo when I was 19 years old. Before, I had been training several sports for many years, such as track and field, handball, indoor football, or archery. I mean, I was in very good health as I already trained regularly. So my health did not improve significantly as I already was in very good health."

Expert no. 5 is today Grand Master of *WingTsun kung-fu*, a significant figure in the international martial arts community. He stated as follows: "I am 75 now and when I was a kid I started with some wrestling or grappling methods which my father, a stage Magician and Illusionist had learned from the illustrious pioneer of esoterics Gurdjieff. These "tricks" made me, a "weak kid", nearly invincible in the school yard. As a teenager, my maternal uncle convinced me to start real wrestling in a traditional wrestling & weightlifting club. Later I added weightlifting, which built my skinny body up to that of an athlete who could lift a person over his head with one arm. In the end of the 1960s I even worked as a catcher for money in a catch-as-can group that was touring Germany. We took any challenger and if he defeated us he would get a fixed price."

Also no. 6 (also a professor and a trainer) answered this question in the affirmative - "Yes, the wrestling training had an influence on my physical strength and endurance". In turn, no. 7 (physical education teacher and university teacher) replied: "Wrestling was the beginning of any systematic physical activity in my life. It was in wrestling training that I learned to roll forward and other exercises. If it weren't for the supplies, my adult life would have taken a completely different course. Thanks to stocks, I have learned to take care of my health and general fitness from the age of 15."

The same respondent, in response to **question 2** (Has training fitness thanks to wrestling helped in acquiring other sports or martial arts skills?), Indicated the development of new skills: "My wrestling training was characterized by great variety and versatility. Often, during training, we also practiced other disciplines, such as playing "Chinese ball", volleyball or rugby elements. These additional sports also included individual exercises that were helpful in specialized wrestling training. During the summer camps, we also played football, athletics and recreational games, such as table tennis and

badminton. Therefore, thanks to wrestling I also acquired other sports skills."

Respondent 6 only replied that he had never dealt with any other martial arts. On the other hand, no. 5 noted the great usefulness of wrestling training: "Yes, it helped me to become a *judo* and *jujutsu* instructor, in *judo* I arrived at 3rd dan. In *aikido* also. "Similarly answered no. 4: "Yes, I think grappling sports, such as wrestling, *judo*, *sambo*, traditional forms of wrestling, etc. are, globally considered, quite similar. Therefore, there exists positive transfer among them. For example, it was quite easy for me to learn Leonese Wrestling skills because I had a black belt in *judo*".

Expert 3 sees another benefit here: "The mental and physical toughness I acquired from wrestling has allowed me to take part in endurance activities such as distance running and triathlon." Expert no. 1 notices the influence of his own professional experience on the subsequent coaching work: "Yes. Currently, I run the Student Sports Club founded by me in 1997 and my students in strength sports achieve high results (currently they have participated in the World Championships 14 times and have won a total of 22 medals, including 9 gold, 6 silver, and 7 bronze medals)."

The same respondent, to **question 3** (Did the knowledge of stocks help in business or scientific work?), Answered in the affirmative: "Yes. Sport has taught me to manage my time wisely, to plan, be humble, persistent, persistent in pursuing my goals, self-discipline, patience in coaching and searching for knowledge."

Expert 2 answered a few questions altogether with the following reflection: "Thanks to stocks, I have found myself well, adapted to and feel for 42 years in my new environment. They gave me confidence in making decisions in action, I always say that wrestling is a sport appropriate to every day of my life. Man often falls down and rises, and this is a sport that he exercises, strengthens his inner strength and will. Thanks to the stocks, I felt good after graduating from the Academy of Physical Education in Krakow, starting with the entrance exam in gymnastics, the 100 m run, and years later, I have been competing in a positive sense with General Mieczyslaw Bienek, who was really fit and in the martial arts room I felt like a fish in water. I want to mention that in TMR in Lancut (*Łańcut*), in grades I and II, I practiced *judo* under the supervision of Mr. [Stanislaw] Cynarski, who was a teacher in a reform school. The knowledge of stocks helped me in my everyday life as well as instilled in me a sporty lifestyle without nicotine, without alcohol."

Expert no. 3 sees the influence of this combat sport on one's own character and personality traits: "It has provided me with self-confidence and drive. Find a way to succeed despite setbacks." The fourth expert emphasizes the rules of conduct here: "I feel I follow some *judo* principles in my daily life, such as the principle of maximum efficiency or the principle of mutual prosperity.

These principles can be applied to work, so I can say yes." The fifth specialist applied this question to the practical application of other martial arts: "It helped me also in Masutatsu Oyama's and Jon Bluming's *Kyokushin* All-round style which was Full Contact and also consisted of wrestling and *judo*. *Kaicho* Bluming, himself a student of the great [Kyuzo] Mifune and Don F. Draeger, had a 9th dan from Japan and awarded me who holds the 6th dan in pure *Kyokushin karate* the 8th dan in his discipline hybridine called "Kyokushin Allround" which was *karate* hitting and kicking plus grappling."

Respondents 6 and 7 indicated a positive impact on their further professional development - scientific ("Yes, wrestling helped me in my scientific career.") And in the role of a physical education teacher - "I prepared my diploma thesis based on my experience in practicing inventory. The work concerned the development of proposals for motor games and activities with mounting, which prepared for the cultivation of wrestling. These were completely new ideas for fun and movement games not described in the literature on the subject so far. I can also say that the knowledge of wrestling helped me start my research work."

Question 4 concerned the determination of the impact of inventories on a professional career. Expert no. 7 explained it as follows: "Thanks to wrestling, I gained a certain level of my own physical fitness and motor skills, which gave me the opportunity to pass the entrance exams at the University of Physical Education in Warsaw with a positive result. Apart from that, while wrestling, I also won the 2nd sports class, which gave me additional points when enrolling at the physical education university, which was also very necessary in my case. Wrestling has also had a significant impact on my professional career." Respondent no. 6 replied briefly: "During more than 40 years I was working with wrestlers teams as a scientific coach.", Pointing to wrestling as a research object. Similarly, for expert no. 4, martial arts opened the way to scientific work: "I entered the university as faculty as a teacher for the subject of *judo*. So, *judo* opened the door for me to develop my career. Martial arts and combat sports, in general, have also allowed me to meet many people and good colleagues around the world."

Expert answer 5 is interesting: "Wrestling is possibly the oldest sport and a great fundament when it comes to developing "torso" power. And when I went to Bulgaria, a nation of chessplayers and wrestlers, to teach in the National Sports Academy in Sofia and in the State University of Plovdiv, I found quick acceptance with my friend, the former Sports Minister of Bulgaria, Prof. Dr Margaritov, and I had a good chance to practice with Bulgarian World Champions and Olympic Champions of Wrestling." The technical and tactical issues of wrestling were, as it were, intentionally and instrumentally practiced to expand the skills of hand-to-hand combat.

Expert no. 3 notes: "I have used the same drive and applied it to my professional development. Additionally, throughout my participation in wrestling, I have come in contact with many outstanding people. These role models have been a big inspiration in my growth as a person." Expert no. 1 stated: "I think that if I had not had the pleasure to train and learn the coaching workshop from Jan Małek, my professional life would have gone completely different." The same, to **question 5** (Was it a school of character, and if so, to what extent?), He replied as follows: "Yes. Working professionally, I completed my master's studies at the University of Physical Education in Krakow, I obtained instructor qualifications in the field of wrestling, free and classic style, bodybuilding and powerlifting – AWF Warsaw, I completed postgraduate studies at UITM in Rzeszów and wrote and defended my doctoral dissertation at the Department of Antropomotrics of the University of Physical Education in Katowice."

Respondent no. 2 also referred to the impact on career and character traits, and gave his achievements: "I think that wrestling helped me in my professional work – 20 years at school, including 15 years as a school director, where I built the first gym in the municipality, 18 years as a commune head – the outcome: 5 gyms, a playground in each village council. This is a typical example of the impact of wrestling on a career. Wrestling is a school of character that cannot be replaced by any other sport, from the ankle joint to a wide neck and ears often with cauliflower, I myself contracted a small cauliflower on my right ear. I trained for 5 years and then for a quarter of a century I played wrestling with children. I am proud of my pupils, who have achieved a lot in their lives, especially great personal culture and friendship. Wrestling is a sport, I dare say, not very traumatic. I haven't had any serious injuries." This expert presented a short description of eight of his pupils, who are also doing great outside the mat, in their professional and personal lives. It is also a testimony to the beneficial educational impact of this trainer.

Respondent 3 to question 5 already answered question 3, but added that "I have attempted to give my best and be responsible for myself I have attempted to give my best and be responsible for myself." Expert 4 noted that in his case it was not necessarily a significant impact: "I am not sure about this. I rather think judo fit my way of acting and thinking. I am not aware that judo changed my character but, instead, reinforced it. I think this was because I was quite "old" when started to practice *judo*." Expert no. 5 pointed precisely: "It is a very "down to earth system" which teaches you the value of biomechanics and discipline." For expert no. 6 it is a more significant influence: "The wrestling life given me fortitude and strength of character." On the other hand, respondent no. 7 explains this impact more precisely: "Yes, wrestling

was a very important character school for me. Thanks to the wrestling training, I learned how to systematically perform certain duties related to studying in high school. Wrestling has also taught me to be persistent in pursuing my goals, overcoming certain difficulties, which, for example, were related to injuries, overcoming various limitations and weaknesses."

Questions 6 and 7 relate to years of training and the occurrence of more serious sports injuries, respectively. Expert no. 7 trained from 15 to 20 years of age. When asked about injuries, he replied, "No, although I did have some knee problems that occurred in year 4 of training. However, these were minor injuries that did not affect my wrestling training at the time." Expert no. 6 explained: "I am no longer training the special sport of wrestling but I have never ever stopped grappling, because my main art of *kung-fu*, namely *WingTsun* (WT), also consists of *chin na*, which means among others grappling, putting in locks and chokes and throwing and anti-throwing." *Nota bene*, he is at the same time an academic professor and holder of high master degrees:

10th degree Master *WingTsun* (from GM LeungTing)
8 dan *Kyokushin* Allround Fighting (Jon Bluming)
8th degree *Wu Ji I Lik Chuan* (Jimmy Heow)
6 dan *Kyokushin karate*
6 dan *hapkido*.

The same, when asked about grudges, he replied: "Though many of my old friends suffered injured fingers and broken shoulders I never had such injuries in my active grappling time."

Expert no. 5 answered: "My activity wrestling career was 10 years, after that I work as a coach and scientist in wrestling." He had no major injuries. Respondent 4, on the other hand, gave the time period "about 25 years" and said the following: "The most serious, acute injury I had was the rupture of my Achilles tendon when I was playing football. I was about 33 years old. Now I have several flipped disks and this is why I have not practiced *judo* for some years. I think this is the consequence of a long sport career in which *judo* practice is just a part of it." Expert No. 3 presented his experience as follows: "I took up wrestling when I was 14 and am now 67 years old, so that means over 50 years of training [...] I started having problems with my knees when I was 18 and have had numerous knee surgeries. I have two artificial knees. I have also had neck and back surgeries that were a result of my participation in wrestling." Respondent No. 1 similarly states: "I trained from childhood, initially handball, then *judo* and wrestling." When asked about sports injuries, he replied in the negative.

Discussion

The fact that physical culture personnel are above average active in terms of leisure activity is confirmed in subsequent studies [cf. Dabrowski, Mazur 2002;

Cynarski *et al.* 2016]. This is due to their above-average physical fitness and skills in various forms of sport and physical recreation. Combat sports, including wrestling in particular, greatly improve. Build strength, endurance and a generally high level of development of motor skills.

The respondents, who are also experts here, quite unanimously confirmed the significant influence of wrestling on the improvement of general physical fitness and development of motor skills, on mental strengthening (strong will, steadfast “fighter character”) and improvement of general health. If someone has become a coach after their sports career, they naturally develop their knowledge and pass it on to the next generations. For some, it is also a source of knowledge in their scientific studies on martial arts – an asset in their scientific work. Perhaps the strength of character developed in hard training on the mat (submaximal and maximum loads) pays off later in the competition for status positions – professional and social.

The role of a wrestling coach is different from that of a martial arts master. The path to the role of a master-teacher does not require further master degrees and long-term study with other masters [*cf.* Cynarski *et al.* 2015; Sieber, Pawelec 2016]. Sports skills as well as instructor courses and coaching specializations make it possible to perform the role and function of a trainer. Educational talent, skills and teaching abilities, the appropriate style of leading a player and managing his career, and working with a team seem to be particularly important [Arziutov *et al.* 2016; Shapie *et al.* 2016; Cynarski 2020a].

Admittedly, today’s youth more often choose other martial arts, especially for their recreational practice [Warchol *et al.* 2021], but wrestling offers an opportunity for international competition, especially as an Olympic sport. The noble ideas and ethos of Olympism and ‘fair play’ [Warchol, Cynarski 2012] play a similar role of the axio-normative canon here as the specific rules of normative ethics in traditional Asian martial arts.

Experience from a sports career and achieved successes (especially in the arena of the Olympic Games) translate into social position after the end of the career, which facilitates further professional functioning [Lopez de Subijna *et al.* 2020; *cf.* Pawlak 1983; Yao, Laurencelle, Trudeau 2020]. However, not only the Olympians are doing very well after their sports career ends [*cf.* Pawlak 1983]. The participants in this study also did great – six out of seven hold PhDs and above. Their students also cope very well in life, also in the absence of higher education, which applies to, for example, the pupils of expert no. 2. Two of the experts mentioned are also martial arts teachers (technical and tactical skills) of the authors of this study.

Conclusions

Specialists very positively assess the impact of wrestling on their further careers after completing competition training. They indicate the improvement of general physical fitness, acquired skills, strengthening of willpower and character. For the participants of the study, practicing wrestling was or is still an asset in their further professional careers, helping them to achieve a better status position. This does not only apply to active coaches themselves.

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Appendix

Wrestling – the impact of their cultivation on achievements in various areas of life Questionnaire for survey research using the interview technique

Please, comment on the impact of wrestling on various areas of your life. It's about open-ended questions (below) and longer answers. Answers will be used for research purposes only.

1. Has practicing sports wrestling significantly improved your health and overall fitness?
2. Has fitness trained with wrestling helped you acquire other sports or martial arts skills?
3. Has knowledge of wrestling helped in business or research work?
4. How did it affect your professional career?
5. Was it a school of character and if so, to what extent?
6. How long have you been training (how many years or for how many years have you been training)?
7. Have you had any serious sports injuries?
(expanded abstract in Polish)

Zapasy: wpływ ich uprawiania na osiągnięcia w różnych obszarach życia

Słowa kluczowe: sport walki, zapasy, sprawność fizyczna, kariera, pozycja społeczna

Streszczenie

Tło / perspektywa. Rzecz dotyczy sportu o wielowiekowej tradycji w Europie i poza Europą. Wiemy, że ten uprawiany od pradawnych czasów sport zapaśniczy buduje siłę i wszechstronną sprawność fizyczną. Ten ciężki trening zapewnia jednak wysoki poziom sprawności i wydolności organizmu. Zawodnik zdobywa też realne umiejętności walki w zwarciu i w pozycji leżącej, co zapewnia mu względne poczucie bezpieczeństwa. Nauki o kulturze fizycznej, w tym socjologia sportu, współtworzą tu perspektywę naukową.

Cel. Podjęto problem wpływu umiejętności zapaśniczych, treningu i doświadczeń z tym związanych na kariery osób, które odniosły w różnych dziedzinach życiowy sukces.

Metoda. Zastosowano jakościową metodę sądów eksperckich, zwaną też metodą sędziów kompetentnych. Na siedem pytań szczegółowych odpowiedziało siedmiu ekspertów, pochodzących pięciu krajów.

Wyniki. Specjaliści bardzo pozytywnie oceniają wpływ uprawiania zapasów na ich dalszą karierę po zakończeniu treningu zawodniczego. Wskazują na poprawę ogólnej sprawności fizycznej, zdobyte umiejętności, wzmocnienie siły woli i charakteru. Wnioski. Dla uczestników badania uprawianie sportu zapaśniczego było lub jest nadal atutem w dalszej karierze zawodowej, pomagając w osiągnięciu lepszej pozycji statusowej.